

A black and white halftone photograph of a prison cell. The image shows vertical bars in the foreground, with a window or opening in the background. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows, creating a somber and confined atmosphere. The halftone dots are visible throughout the image, giving it a textured, grainy appearance.

Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman

*A fragment
of the prison
experiences of Emma
Goldman and
Alexander Berkman*

Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman

A fragment of the prison experiences of Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman



Published by Good Press, 2022

goodpress@okpublishing.info

EAN 4066338111708

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A FOREWORD

THE STATE PRISON AT JEFFERSON CITY, MO. EMMA
GOLDMAN

THE ATLANTA FEDERAL PENITENTIARY Statement by
Alexander Berkman

REPLY OF FRED G. ZERBST Warden of the U. S. Federal
Penitentiary, Atlanta, Ga.

REPLY TO WARDEN FRED G. ZERBST

PERSECUTION OF POLITICALS

IN CONCLUSION

A FOREWORD

Table of Contents

There was a time—and that not so very long ago—when popular ignorance and superstition looked upon an insane person as one possessed of the devil or of some other evil spirit. They sought to drive the “evil one” out by beating and torturing the insane, and often even by drowning, hanging, and burning.

We have fortunately passed that stage of stupid brutality. Today even the most ignorant man knows that insanity is a disease. But in regard to crime and criminals we are still in the stage of dark-age superstition. We look upon the criminal today as we did upon the insane fifty or seventy-five years ago. Most men still believe that by beating and punishing the criminal, by hanging and electrocution, we can drive the “evil spirit” out of him. This process is called reforming the criminal.

Yet common sense and all human experience prove that the criminal is no more responsible for crime than the crazy man for his insanity. The pseudo-scientific theories of the Lombrosos in regard to crime and criminals have been thoroughly exploded and proven utterly fallacious. Even if the Lombroso myth that the criminal is born were true, what good would it do to punish him? There might be some social justification for his isolation, but how could the criminal, if born such, be held accountable for his criminality?

But as a matter of fact—as modern criminology has proven beyond all dispute—the criminal is made, not born. He is the product of his environment, a child of poverty and

desperation, of misery, greed, and ambition. He is at the same time the symbol and the proof of a diseased social condition, the miscarriage of perverted economic arrangements. Fully 97 per cent. of all crime is due directly to our economic institutions. The other 3 per cent. are traceable to the artificiality and neurosis of modern life, to the anti-social tendencies cultivated among the weeds in the neglected and mistreated garden of human life.

I have been in close contact with so-called criminals for a great many years. Yet nowhere have I found the alleged "criminal type," nor have I ever discovered the "real criminal." He does not exist. Crime is simply misdirected energy, effort applied wrongly. The average criminal is just the average man, generally speaking. If in any sense he may be considered a "variation," it is only because of his frequently superior initiative, daring and intelligence. His often anti-social activity is conditioned by his unconventional vocation, not by any inherent criminal or anti-social tendencies. I am not speaking of congenital criminal degenerates whose number is infinitesimal, and who belong in the care of the alienist. The vast majority of the so-called criminal class are thoroughly normal human beings, if the term may be applied to the type of man produced by modern civilization. I have had scores and hundreds of professional criminals, young and old, tell me again and again, "The only hope and ambition of my life is just to get a little pile, so that I can feel secure from want. Then I'd take my family somewhere in the country and live a quiet and honest life."